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WAIT LIST GROWS FOR UNDERFUNDED CARDIAC PROCEDURE

VICTORIA—A non-invasive cardiac procedure that helps patients avoid stroke or invasive cardiac procedures is seriously underfunded by the Campbell Liberals, says Health Critic Adrian Dix.

“This is a simple, non-invasive procedure that literally can give people back their lives,” said Dix. “We have the equipment and the physicians available. What we don’t have is an investment by the Campbell Liberal’s – it’s unconscionable.”

Cardiac ablation is a simple procedure used to correct atrial-fibrulation or irregular racing heartbeats. Abnormal heart rhythms can cause palpitations, fatigue, shortness of breath and, most significantly, stroke. Successful cardiac ablation can eliminate the need for open-heart surgeries or long-term drug therapies.

“Continued underfunding by the Campbell Liberals has led to long wait times and patient stress,” said Dix.

There are currently over 400 B.C. residents on the wait list and that list continues to grow. The B.C. Liberal government only funds 200 procedures a year.

Cardiac ablation is only performed at Victoria’s Royal Jubilee and Vancouver’s St. Paul’s Hospitals. Of the two labs at the Victoria hospital one is mothballed due to lack of funds from the Ministry of Health.

“Patients, many in their fifties, are asked to stop work, put their lives on hold, and wait,” said Dix. “The Campbell Liberals need to invest adequately in this procedure – it can save lives and further health costs.”

The Ministry of Health mean wait time for cardiac care is twelve weeks but patients needing cardiac ablation can wait up to two years. A Victoria patient diagnosed in 2004, has been on the wait list since 2005 and can barely leave his house. A Quesnel patient has waited more than a year and will wait at least six more months. Meanwhile, he can’t work and must restrict his movements.

– 30 –